



Large exhibit features life-size animatronic dinosaurs & mammals

S ternberg visitors will have the opportunity to trek back in time 66 million years and explore the world that dinosaurs once ruled in the museum's upcoming traveling exhibition: "Expedition Dinosaur: Rise of the Mammals."

The exhibit, which is curated by renowned working paleontologist, Thomas Williamson, was created by Stage 9 Exhibits and is distributed by Exhibits Development Group. It is scheduled to open Sept. 29 and close Dec. 21

"I'm extremely enthusiastic about bringing this blockbuster exhibit featuring dinosaurs, the asteroid impact that led to their demise, and the mammals that arose from the extinction event to dominate the earth," said Reese Barrick, Sternberg Museum director.

The exhibition combines prehistoric reptiles with an interactive educational experience for visitors of all ages. It turns the clock back to the Cretaceous Period, 66 million years ago, when dinosaurs ruled the Earth and explains how mammals evolved to become the dominant species after the downfall of the dinosaur era.

Featuring life-size and lifelike animatronic dinosaurs and mammals with realistic movements



and sound, museum goers will have the opportunity to venture into the time when some of the most iconic dinosaurs ruled the Earth: Tyrannosaurus Rex, Triceratops, Edmontosaurus, Ankylosaurus, Pachycephalosaurus, and the curious oviraptor Anzu. Giant Pterosaurs flew through the skies with 40-foot wing spans and marine lizards such as the plesiosaurs thrived in the oceans.

In addition to standing face-to-face with life-sized dinosaurs and prehistoric mammals, visitors will have the opportunity to have their picture taken in the jaws of a T-Rex and study fossils that are as many as 300 million years old.

Young paleontologists-in-training will hone their budding archeology skills by extracting dinosaur bones from a fossil dig pit.

**Included in the nearly
6,000 square-foot exhibition**

- Dinosaur fossil hunters' Jeep truck and tools
- Interactive Dinosaur draw and animation station
- Ten (10) full-motion, animatronic dinosaurs and mammals with realistic movements & sounds
- Full size T-Rex skull replica
- Geology interactive with augmented reality sand play
- Large Dinosaur mouth photo op
- Day of the Event Comet Puzzle
- Video fossil scanning station with interactive display.
- A Dinosaur fossil dig.



MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

*Costumed
characters,
other fun events
to take place on
Star Wars Day
Sept. 9*

Costumed characters from the epic Star Wars series will soon populate Sternberg Museum.

According to Ian Trevethan, Sternberg education outreach director, plans are underway to host a Star Wars Day from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Sept. 9.

Trevethan said it's been several years since the last Star Wars event.

"It was the year before COVID, and at that point, it had become a really big deal," Trevethan said. "I think we had about 500 people that day. Usually on average, when we do a Star Wars, we get pretty good numbers, so we'll see what we get this year."

Trevethan said costumed characters from the 501st and Rebel Legions, which are Lucasfilm approved costume groups, will once again travel to Hays from Kansas City and Wichita to participate.

The 501st Legion is an international costuming organization dedicated to celebrating Star Wars through the creation and use of quality costumes that portray the villainous, morally ambiguous, or non-partisan characters from the Star Wars universe.

The Rebel Legion, meanwhile, is an international fan-based volunteer organization dedicated to the construction and wearing of screen-accurate replicas of the Rebel Alliance, the Galactic Republic, the New Republic, the Resistance, the Jedi Order, and other heroes from the Star Wars universe.

The Sternberg event, Trevethan explained, will be entertaining as well as an educational event with

Characters from the 501st and Rebel Legion, which are Lucasfilm approved costume groups, will travel to Hays to participate.



a focus on zoology.

"I like to talk about the zoology of the creatures from Star Wars, but also focus on a bit of geology like planetary geology," he said. "Different volunteers will be set-up at stations to talk about the fictional animals seen in the movies and compare them to those that actually existed many years ago. For example, the mammoth we have on display was an ice age animal and I would compare it to the fictional Taunton that I built and discuss how these animals adapted to colder weather."

The different costume characters will be located throughout the museum along with museum employees who will be on hand to discuss some of the educational aspects. In addition, several stations will

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IAN TREVETHAN
EDUCATION OUTREACH DIRECTOR

be set-up just for fun, Trevethan said.

"I bring in my entire 1970 and 80s spaceship collection and put it on display, and we have fun decorations throughout the museum," he said. "Last time, I had a Lego enthusiast who built an entire scene from one of the movies, which was pretty incredible."

Trevethan said there will be a costume contest for the kids with prizes awarded. Visitors will also have an opportunity to have their photo take with their favorite Star War characters. In addition, he plans to have some hands-on, crafty, kid-friendly activities throughout the museum.

"Overall, the idea is to get people through the door of the museum and give them an opportunity to have a really fun, outside of the box experience that they wouldn't normally have," he said. "I don't want to totally throw out the education and science part, but I do want to encourage people to just let go and have a good time. Hopefully, we can unlock people's imagination, which is important when it comes to critically examining the world around us. We just want people to have a unique experience, have some fun and perhaps learn a few things along the way."



In addition to costumed characters, a variety of other activities are planned, including a costume contest.

Design, Design Everywhere A Design

Since 1989, exhibits director Greg Walters has been busy designing and maintaining the museum's exhibits



To say that exhibits director Greg Walters knows a few things about the history and development of Sternberg Museum would be a major understatement.

Walters, who holds the current title of exhibits director, has been with the museum since 1989, first starting when it was housed in the lower floor of McCartney Hall at Fort Hays State University.

“My first job was advertised as ‘preparator/conservator’, so fossil prep and collections care were a large part of my original responsibilities along with exhibits,” Walters said. “When I was hired, Sternberg Memorial Museum, occupied the ground floor of McCartney with additional collection storage spaces scattered across campus.”

Walters said FHSU had planned to consolidate the museum facilities by converting all of McCartney Hall to a dedicated museum building.

“I was working on those plans, but in mid-1990, a large-dome shaped building that housed a struggling recreation center next to interstate was offered to the

university,” Walters said. “That changed everything.”

With the purchase of what was known as the Metroplex dome, Walters focused his attention on general museum planning and exhibit design for an entirely new museum. Because exhibits took more of his time, his job was reclassified as exhibits director a year before the new museum opened.

“The grand opening of the new Sternberg Museum of Natural History in March of 1999 is obviously one of the biggest highlights of my career,” Walters said. “It was a culmination of nine years of planning and creative effort by me and others. Hundreds of people traveled through a massive blizzard from across the state and beyond to attend the opening celebration.”

Since then, Walters has spent the past 23 years planning, designing, fabricating, installing and maintaining exhibits for the museum.

“This includes permanent exhibits, although nothing is really permanent. I mean they are just long-term,” Walters said. “We’ve had exhibits that have been here for many years, but I can’t say for certainty they will be here



Exhibits Director Greg Walters works on a computer design for a potential exhibit on the Kansas state flag, which would focus on the natural history elements that have been included in the flag over the years.

forever. We would like to change some of our long-term exhibits, but other things come up that take priority.”

Walters said most of his time is spent on temporary exhibits and traveling exhibits.

“That can be things that we bring in, and even if we bring them in, many of them still require us to do a lot of the layout,” he said. “An example of that would an exhibit we did last summer. It was the world premiere for the exhibit, meaning we were the first place anywhere that the exhibit had ever been. We actually worked with the developers, editing some of their labels and suggested rewrites on their labels, which they incorporated into the design.”

Sometimes, Walters said Sternberg supplements an exhibit with things from its collection.

“For example, we had an exhibit featuring big robotic insects, so we supplemented that with fossil insects from our collection,” he said. “Other times, we work with local artists or photographers who do something natural history related, and we’ll do an exhibit of their works.”

In addition to working with exhibits from outside sources, Walters said he and other staff members also produce internal exhibits.

“We try to keep things changing,” Walters said. “In the past few years, things haven’t changed quite as much as they used to, but we’re constantly thinking about new ideas, not only ones we can display internally but also travel them to other locations.”

When considering which exhibits to bring into the museum, Walters said the objective is to not only attract people to see it, but to educate them and help them value the natural world.

“Our mission is to advance an appreciation and understanding of Earth’s natural history and the evolutionary forces that impact it,” he said. “It’s important that people

understand and appreciate the natural world. We’re a product of that world and we depend on it for our survival and for the quality of our lives. All our actions have a profound impact, for better or worse, on the natural world. We’re not separate from it – we’re a part of it.

“When our exhibits explore some natural topic, the real focus is what it means to the visitor,” he continued. “What’s important is what they do with their understanding and appreciation after they leave the museum. Our job is to inspire, to spark an interest, to evoke wonder. An exhibit experience is not the end, it’s just the means.”



In addition to the overall design, Walters spends time in the museum's woodworking shop building exhibits.

More Than A Sternberg classes growing into popular educational resource Museum



A Sternberg program initiated in 2012 has grown into a popular educational resource for college students looking for potential employment in a museum setting.

According to Sternberg Museum Director Reese Barrick, the Museum Studies certificate is a two-year cycle comprised of four courses with one offered each semester through Fort Hays State University. The courses include museum administration and management, museum exhibit design, museum collections management, and museum informal training.

“We came up with the idea to create a certificate program because we wanted the museum to be a little more integrated with the university,” Barrick said. “So, the first class I taught was in late 2012 to one student. The last four times I’ve taught the course we’ve had 10 students in each class, which is the maximum number we accepted. It’s grown popular enough that the university has asked us to take the cap off so that there can be 12 or 15 students in each course.”

Students who complete any or all courses could potentially have an advantage when applying for museum employment, Barrick said.

“A lot of museum jobs require some specific training, whether it’s being a zoologist, a paleontologist, an art person or historian,” Barrick said. “But a lot of people who get degrees in those areas don’t know anything about museums. So, they apply for a museum job but don’t have any museum background.

This certificate lets employers know that an applicant has that background in addition to their area of expertise.”

Although museum coursework is not uncommon at other universities, it’s typically part of a master’s degree program.

“We are one of the few universities in the entire country that has Museum Studies that can be taken as either an undergraduate or graduate student, which in itself is unique,” Barrick said. “In addition, our certificate program requires a person to

take a course in each of the four areas that most museums cover, such as education exhibits, collections, and administration. There’s a lot of certificate programs where you can go and focus on just one particular area, but anybody that comes through our certificate program is pretty well versed in the whole realm of

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**DR. REESE BARRICK
STERNBERG MUSEUM DIRECTOR**

what museums do.”

Although the four courses are offered through the geoscience department at FHSU, Barrick said the course attract students from a variety of areas.

“Obviously, paleontology students take the certificate program because it’s listed as a geoscience courses, but we get history students, biology students and even an English student,” Barrick said. “My first student was an art student. Not everybody who works at a museum is involved in collections, so that’s why we designed a program to give a background in all areas of museum operation.”

BASIC OVERVIEW OF MUSEUM STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

Museum Administration and Management

Instructor Dr. Reese Barrick: “In my particular course, every student during the semester, has to come up with a museum idea in a particular city in the country, and then develop that museum during the semester. Our focus isn’t just on natural history museums; instead, we try to get people to think about museums in general.”

Museum Informal Learning

Instructor Ian Trevethan: “Part one of the class focuses on public speaking and public presentation. The goal is to teach students how to effectively communicate scientific information to a non-scientific audience. Part two involves all aspects of planning and implementing an education program, which would include planning, gathering materials, presentation methods, and so on. Students also need to adapt their education program to different audience levels, such as elementary or secondary. Students need to learn to deal with the unexpected and pivot quickly to offset those unexpected moments that often occur during a presentation.”

Museum Exhibit Design

Instructor Greg Walters: “I think a lot of students think they’re going to make an exhibit when they come into class. But we don’t actually build exhibits because in reality, when I’m working on things, it takes me longer than 15 weeks from beginning to end to do an exhibit. Generally, I try to teach them what makes a good exhibit. I also stress that an exhibit is usually not just a single element, but a group of related exhibits that make an exhibition. Consequently, an exhibit designer needs to think in terms of the overall gallery.

After those general discussions, I divide the class into groups, and each group will produce a schematic design for an entire gallery and present it to the class. And then, in the final weeks of the class, I have them work on design development for a single individual exhibit within that gallery. That includes writing and designing all the labels, choosing all the specimens, and producing a detailed layout. When completed, students will present their plans.”

Museum Collections Management

Instructor Dr. Jackson Roberts: Collections management is a relatively new term in museums and cultural heritage. It has grown from the need to develop professional practice in looking after culturally and historically significant objects and their associated information. It covers a range of activities, including documentation, care, storage, movement, and loans, and applies to organizations ranging from national galleries to small local museums. Caring for cultural and natural history collections today also requires knowledge of legal and ethical considerations.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Bill Gasper • Public Relations

When retiree Bill Gasper volunteered at Sternberg Museum, he anticipated that he would be helping out at the front desk or in the gift shop. But when he was asked if he'd consider working in the public relations area, he jumped at the chance.

Gasper, who retired from Hays High School in 2019 after serving 15 years as the school's journalism teacher, started at the museum in May and produces the Pteranodon newsletter. He also assists with social media posts and designs advertising materials as needed. In addition, he has taken on the responsibility of updating the museum's website.

"It's been a while since I have regularly done this type of work, so I'm a bit rusty and do not complete the work as fast as I used to," Gasper said. "However, it's been a fun experience, learning more about the museum and the many things it has to offer."

A graduate of Victoria High School and Fort Hays State University, Gasper took over the journalism program at Hays High in 2004. During his tenure, Gasper said he was blessed with outstanding students who won numerous national and state team awards, as well as many individual awards.

As a group, Hays High was named state journalism champion three times and runner up twice. In 2017, he was named the Jackie Engel Award, which is given to the top journalism adviser in Kansas. He was also named Best of the Best by the USD 489 Board of Education.

In addition to his teaching duties, Gasper served as drama director for the Hays High School musical for three years and is the current director of the school's spring play, a position he has held for 19 years.

Prior to teaching, Gasper was involved in the community newspaper business for more than 20 years and owned newspapers in Ellis and Hoxie. While



in Hoxie, Gasper performed in and directed several community theater productions as well as served as director for several high school productions.

Gasper took a short break from the newspaper business in 1989 when he went to work for K N Energy in Hastings, Neb., as the company's publications coordinator. He was promoted to manager of organizational communications and was transferred to Lakewood, Colo., where he stayed until purchasing the Hoxie newspaper in 1994.

Gasper is an original member of Jimmy Dee and the Fabulous Destinations, an area band that was named to the Kansas Music Hall of Fame in 2014. Four years later, he and other band members were inducted into the Victoria High School Alumni Association Hall of Fame.

Gasper and his wife, Pam, will soon celebrate their 45th anniversary with their two sons and three grandchildren (with another on the way).

PALEO LAB NOTES

A PLACE

FOR CONSERVATION

by Dr. Laura Wilson
Chief Curator

Conservation is at the forefront of many people's minds – especially those working in natural history fields. Earth is in the midst of a major biodiversity crisis with extinction rates estimated between 1,000 and 10,000 times background (“normal”) extinction rates (source: World Wildlife Fund)

Unlike other mass extinction events, like the one that decimated dinosaur populations 66 million years ago, this one is driven by human activities like habitat destruction and climate change. To better understanding how Earth's systems are changing and how to preserve ecosystems for the future, many scientists are looking in a new direction: the past.

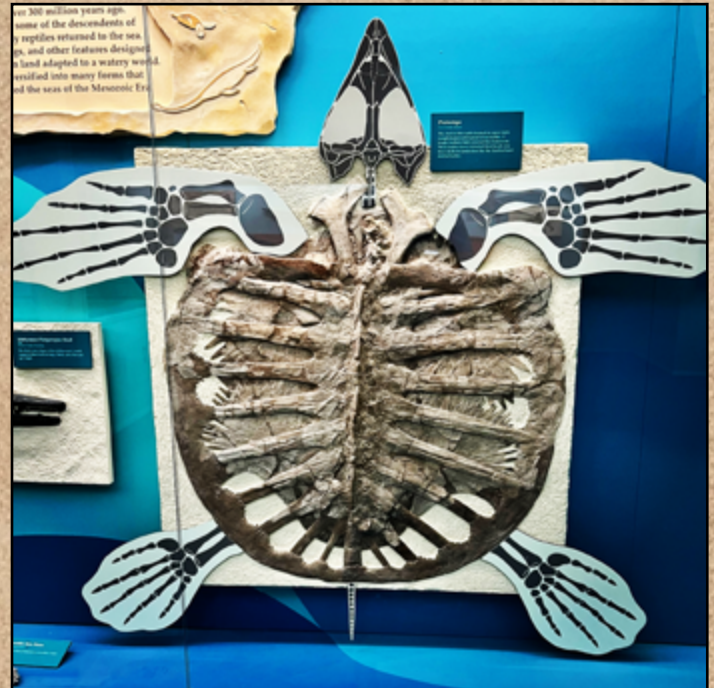
Studying fossils may not be the obvious place to turn for ideas of how to conserve, preserve, and restore natural resources for the future. However, the emerging field of conservation paleobiology shows us we have a lot more to learn from rocks and fossils.

Conservation paleobiology uses knowledge gained from studying the geologic and paleontologic records and applies it to species conservation, habitat restoration, and sustainability. Essentially, Earth's past is viewed as a series of experiments from which we can learn important lessons about how plants and animals live and die through environmental change.

Through these studies, ice cores, sediment cores, tree rings, and fossils can be used to inform current conservation strategies. By studying past responses of ecosystems to climate change, habitat shifts, and the introduction of new species, researchers can identify patterns and principles that can guide current conservation efforts.

As a natural history museum, the Sternberg Museum has a strong focus on conservation. Our collections are vital to understanding, measuring, and monitoring the biodiversity of past and present ecosystems of the region.

Our zoology research and exhibits echo some of these concerns (like our “Rattlerssss: From Fear to Fascination” exhibit). However, there is obviously room to grow as paleontologists help tackle current conservation problems with lessons from the past.



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